

Vicar's Prattle: August 30.

What is the cost of discipleship?

What does it cost to commit ourselves to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour?

The crux of these questions is: Do you believe in God's salvation for you through the death, resurrection and redemption of his son Jesus Christ? And. Do you believe this Salvation is free? Or is there a cost to you? What is your cross to bear? And...

Finally, what does it cost to actually take up your cross and follow Jesus; the one true God?

So free salvation.

Let's have a think about that for a moment. Is your salvation in Christ free or does it cost? And if it costs, what does it cost? We know and generally believe, that we receive salvation from God freely; no expense to us, right? However, we are not so naïve as to believe this salvation is completely free. Once received, there is a cost and it may be different for each of us. We commit everything we are to God when we accept this free gift, but then payment becomes due. It's a bit of a both/and situation! Salvation is both free and costly all at the same time?

Let me illustrate with a bit of a story. Now suppose I had the desire to climb Mount Everest, which, by the way, I absolutely do not, but just for the sake of story, suppose I did. The financial cost of climbing Mount Everest would be prohibitive. I don't know if you know this, but it actually costs upward of \$90,000 to make an attempt at climbing this iconic mountain. I don't know about you, but I don't have that kind of money just lying around. But, just suppose some wealthy businessperson heard of my desire to climb Mount Everest and thought, that they could bankroll it for me. What if they offered to pay for everything, the entire expedition? They're going to pay for all the expensive clothing and equipment; all the gear needed, as well as accommodation, transportation, guides, and that all important training. So financially, it would be totally free for me. But, if I accepted this person's free offer, I would then have just committed myself to at least making a real attempt at climbing Mount Everest. In accepting, I would need to train for long months or years. This would not be easy; in fact, it would be exceedingly difficult. And, although the financial costs would be covered, I could actually cost me even more than money; it could cost me my life. Just in the last decade there have been over 200 people who have lost significant mobility or the ability to work or walk from failed attempts to climb this mountain not to mention the financial costs. As well as that, there have been over 70 deaths. So far from free, climbing Mount Everest could cost me the ultimate cost, my very life. So yes, its free, yet could literally cost everything.

Jesus freely offers the water of life to everyone who thirsts and salvation to any who ask for it. Simply dip your hands and drink, or open your heart and ask. But understand this, when we receive his free offer, we are no longer our own; we have been bought with the price of Jesus' own blood. So, to take up our cross and truly follow Christ is free and costly all at the same time.

Jesus asks us to consider who he is, the ramifications of what he is about to do, not only for them, but for all humanity. He tells his disciples about the upcoming trials, murder, suffering and death, but also about his resurrection, eternal life and the offer of the same for all who follow him. He is asking them and us to understand the cost. He says '*deny yourselves....the first will be last, the last first....you gain your life you must first lose it...*'

These requests don't sound free to me, they sound serious and costly. And yet is there another way? Are we not called deep within us, to the core of our being to follow where this itinerant preacher leads? Are we not given all the facts? Do our hearts not burn within our chests aching for his connection? We don't really have a choice. The truth beckons.

There are absolutely no costs involved in following Christ, whilst at the same time enormous cost. What does it cost to make disciples or grow in faith? Do you even recognize this line?

Making disciples, growing in faith is our motto, our slogan, our catch cry for ourselves and for others. However, like Jesus' edict this week, we are to take up our cross and follow him, in body, mind or spirit. But what does that mean? And what does it cost?

I would like us to consider how our lives would be different if at some point, we had never made the decision to follow, or commit our lives to a God. Think about it, can we really afford to not commit our lives to God anew?

I know I am preaching to the converted here. You all have made that conscious effort to follow God, to come to church, to learn, foster and nurture a living relationship with Jesus Christ; to allow the Holy Spirit into your hearts and direct you in right living and a right life. But have you ever thought about the cost to you or to others? Perhaps this is something you can reflect on this week? Think about what you thought or decided at the beginning of your journey? What you consider in order to keep following Jesus? What is your cross? What would your life be like if you didn't have God in it? And, maybe give God the glory and praise for your life which is freely saved, free and costly all at the same time.

But I'll leave you with this question; How do you make new disciples for God? How do you personally grow your faith? And how much are you willing to pay to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

Big questions for the next week

Shalom

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